

**ELECTION RULES**

MSU Elections are open to all full student members of Marjon Students’ Union. All candidates are entitled to equal opportunities, and the elections should be accessible for all students, regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age or personal financial status.

These rules are binding and apply to all candidates (and campaign teams) running in an election and to all agents (and campaign teams) taking part in a referendum.

Any questions or queries you have about an election should in the first instance be directed to the DRO. Rulings on the interpretation of the rules shall be made by the RO, Peter Robinson NUS.

Any queries regarding the rules should be made to the DRO (mdavies@marjon.ac.uk) and ***before*** engaging in any action that may be in breach of the rules.

For further election details please see MSU election by-law.

The rules are reviewed and implemented by the MSU Elections Committee.

**1. IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER**

All students and their campaign teams are expected to abide by:

* MSU policy
* University rules and Codes of Conduct
* The Law

Failure to adhere to these may result in disciplinary action.

**2. THE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

The Elections Committee will be comprised of the following:

* The Returning Officer (an NUS staff member (in abstentia)
* The Deputy Returning Officer MSU General Manager or their nominee
	+ The Chair (MSU President) or alternate Officer Trustee (who is not a candidate in the election)
* Another MSU Officer Trustee (who is not a candidate in the election).
* An External Trustee

In the event, that all Officer Trustees choose to stand in the election/act as either an agent or a member of a campaign team in the referendum, then the Officer Trustee positions on the Elections Committee will be formed of Student Trustees.

The Elections Committee will be responsible for:

* Writing and updating the Election & Referenda Rules and associated guidelines
* Agreeing MSU elections and referendum timetable
* Administering and promoting all MSU elections and referendum
* Responding to complaints and any issues relating to rules and conduct
* Overseeing the work of the DRO

**3. ELECTION & REFERENDA RULES**

All candidates/agents (and their campaign teams):

* Will abide by the Election & Referenda Rules as set out in this document, and those set out in the Election key dates document, budget and other guidelines as produced by the Elections Committee.
* Will act in the interests of a fair election/referendum.
* Will act with integrity and not mislead the electorate.
* Will show respect and consideration at all times to the other candidates, their supporters, all other students, all staff and members of the community.
* Will be held liable for the actions of their campaign team or anyone else acting on their behalf.

**4. ELIGIBILITY TO STAND FOR ELECTION (OR PARTICIPATE AS A MEMBER OF A CAMPAIGN TEAM)**

* All candidates/agents (and their campaign teams) must be full members of MSU as defined by the MSU Constitution
* All candidates must be a full member for the duration of their elected time in office (with the exception of Sabbatical Officer Candidates)
* No candidates for any elections may run on a slate i.e. each candidate must stand as an individual and not as part of a team.
* Unopposed sabbatical candidates must be available for hustings and stand against re- open nominations.
* Unopposed non-sabbaticals, or remaining candidates as a result of all others withdrawing, may automatically take office on Election Day.
* Nominees who have been or are subject to a university or MSU disciplinary procedure should highlight this to the Elections Committee. Approval to run may be subject to the decision of this committee. Failure to do this may result in disqualification.

**5. STATEMENTS/MANIFESTOS**

* Each candidate should provide a statement (manifesto) setting out their main objectives for the year. The manifesto is a document which says who the candidate is, why they are standing for election and what they intend to do, should they get elected.
* Manifestos for all elections must not be more than 500 words long. (This is a limit not a target).
* Manifestos must abide by the rules and must not defame or libel any other candidate or individual.
* Candidates may include past/present Union posts.
* SU Officers may not propose or second or otherwise support any candidate(s).
* Nomination forms and manifestos must be submitted together.
* A deadline for the submission of the nomination and the manifesto will be set for each election.  Nominations and/or manifestos received after the deadline will not be accepted.

**6. CAMPAIGNING**

The Elections Committee may define additional campaign-free zones. There will be at least a two-meter campaign-free zone around any MSU polling station. Candidates cannot enter these campaign-free zones.

Campaigning is not permitted in the library, computer rooms or other designated quiet study areas.

All candidates/agents (and their campaign teams) should also abide by the following;

* Only campaign or use campaigning materials from the campaigning start date published in the relevant election/referenda key dates.
* Only positively promote the candidate and what they want to achieve in their position.
* Not negatively campaign, e.g. being offensive or derogatory about the competition or making attacks of a personal nature against another candidate, their manifestos or members of their campaign team. To ensure equal opportunities, all candidates/agents have the right to the same access to the electorate:
* If you are involved in any MSU club, society, volunteering or media stream, and wish to use this to promote your campaign, you must grant equal access to other candidates involved in your election
* MSU clubs, societies, volunteering or media streams may not endorse candidates through their social media or through any other means.
* University and MSU staff may not endorse any candidates/agents.
* Candidates may not endorse other candidates.
* Hustings shall be held in the main bar at times and dates to be determined by the DRO and agreed by the RO. Any candidate absent from hustings shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the election. The RO or a nominee shall undertake the adjudication of hustings.

Posters and other printed media

* A4 and A3 posters are allowed in designated areas only
* Homemade t shirts need to be accounted for at a cost of £2.00 per shirt.

Campus Campaigning

* Marjon Student Union and Plymouth Marjon University have set out areas for legitimate campaign posters and banners, that can be used during the MSU Elections.
* Any Candidate that does not follow these rules may incur a sanction.
* All material used must not be defamatory to other candidates or rude.
* Blue Tac can be used but not Sellotape.
* Drawing pins only on notice boards where appropriate.
* No material must be used on campus floors.
* No posters on any door glass panels.

Designated areas

* Posters can be displayed inside halls only.
* Dining Room
* Corridors to and from Shop or MSU Presidents Office.
* Shop Main Entrance facing the Halls.

**Please Note**

* Posters or banners must not be put up above shoulder height and the use of ladders is prohibited.
* Candidates are responsible for removing all posters and banners by **4pm Friday 21st March.**

Expenses

* Election campaigns cost money to run, so we have a limit in place to ensure that the cost is not a barrier. Candidates are expected to keep accurate information about their expenditure and must submit this (with receipts) to the DRO, before voting is completed.
* Candidates are allowed a strict allowance which must not be exceeded.  The amount of this allowance will be £60 of which £30 will be refunded by MSU after the election.  Receipts must be produced for all materials used, whether paid for or free.
* You can use any item that anyone could reasonably get for free. This would usually include cardboard, wood, paint, adhesives, chalk, pens and pencils.
* If you have any questions, ask the DRO before you purchase (and use) something for your campaign. Costs incurred by your campaigners are covered by this limit too.

**FOR EXAMPLE**

**You can make banners from cardboard boxes and paint, and it won’t be taken out of your budget. But if your mum owns Cadbury’s, you can’t give out free chocolates because she gave them to you – even though they were technically free to you. You would be charged for each.**

* No candidate may receive financial or other material assistance from any external body e.g. political organisations, or sponsor

Training

* Tailored training and/or briefings are offered to all successful candidates to prepare them for the role they have been elected to.

**7. USING SOCIAL MEDIA**

All candidates/agents (and their campaign teams) should adhere to guidelines on using social media/email

MSU will set up a SU Officer Election Event in which candidates in that election are permitted to post.

Candidates may set up Facebook pages. The DRO must be added to these.

* Candidates/agents should NOT use dating platforms, such as, but not limited to, bumbledate, tinder, etc., as part of their election campaign or to canvass votes.
* No activity group should give preferential treatment to specific candidate/agent. For example, if a candidate/agent were to post in a group and another candidate/agent also wishes to post in that group, the group administrators must not favour one candidate/agent over another.

Candidates/agents may not use mailing lists.

* No endorsement of other candidates may take place online.

**8. BREACH OF RULES**

The Elections Committee will use these rules as a guideline in the case of enquiries and complaints and will come to a decision.

Any breach of the rules may be punished. Sanctions could include but not limited to:

* An informal warning- verbally or in writing
* A formal warning, which may or may not be made public to the electorate
* A ban on campaigning, for a defined period
* Total disqualification

Decisions made by the elections committee are not subject to appeal.

In the case of total disqualification, the Returning Officer’s decision will be final.

**9. COMPLAINTS**

All complaints must be sent to mdavies@marjon.ac.uk

Complaints should be made as soon as the issue arises and should not generally be raised at a later date.

All complaints must be made before the deadline set in the election/ referendum timetable which shall be scheduled before the count.

**Complaints received after the deadline may not be considered or acted upon**.

**Responsibilities of the Returning Officer &**

**Deputy Returning Officer**

* The Returning Officer (RO) who shall not be a full member of the Union shall be appointed annually by the SU Executive.
* The RO, who must remain totally impartial, shall be responsible for good conduct throughout the election and have sole interpretation of the election regulations. They shall not engage with any discourses with any candidate save that of clarifying election rules.
* The Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) shall be responsible for the administration and the election processes.
* The RO, in partnership with the DRO, shall ensure that the election of all Union posts takes place before the end of March each year.
	+ The dates of elections for Union Officers, a copy of election timetable and a copy of the election regulations shall be posted, by the DRO, on the Union notice boards at least 21 University working days before the elections.
	+ Nomination forms will be available from the DRO or their nominee and shall be available from the MSU Office or services reception 10 University working days before the election. The nomination form shall contain a copy of the description of the role of each position in the election.
	+ The RO may be assisted in the count by a number of individuals appointed by her/him.
	+ The DRO shall inform candidates of the time and the venue of the count. Candidates may have their representatives attend as observers only.
	+ The DRO shall produce a list of candidates, together with the proposer and seconder; it shall be displayed on the Union notice boards within 48 hours of the close of nominations.
	+ The RO, sanctioned by the Executive will draw up election rules.
	+ The DRO must publicise the location and arrangements of the hustings and assisted voting stations, together with a list of candidates' manifestos
	+ The DRO must ensure that provisions have been made, as far as possible, to enable all full members to vote.
	+ Any challenge or complaint concerning the administration and election process will be heard and determined by the RO within 48 hours of such a complaint being lodged by a full member of the Union, the candidate or their nominee. Complaints of this nature must be received before the count.
	+ In determining a resolution to the complaint, the RO after hearing all the appropriate evidence may/not uphold the complaint; or may halt elections, sanction or disqualify candidates.
	+ In the event of posts falling vacant then a by-election shall be arranged by the DRO. Nominations shall open no later than three working days after confirmation of the vacancy arising or, in the event that the election would run into vacation time within three days of the start of term. All other elections regulations apply.

**Further Regulations and Rules**

* + Members of the Union can stand for election upon completion of a nomination form signed by the candidate and at least one proposer and one seconder, together with 18 supporters of the nomination. Nomination forms must reach the DRO, or a person appointed by him/her not later than at the appointed deadline before the election.
	+ Candidates may produce a manifesto or poster, which must be handed in with the completed nomination form.
	+ Suitable identification of full membership shall be provided by the voter.
	+ Reopen nominations RON shall be a candidate in all Union elections.
	+ Voting shall be by secret ballot and shall be conducted according to the rules of the operation of the alternative transferable voting system as set by the Electoral Reform Society. *(*[*www.electoral-reform.org.uk/alternative-vote*](http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/alternative-vote)*).*
	+ Results of the election should normally be posted immediately and become official within 48 hours providing no complaint has been lodged with the RO.
	+ The count will take place immediately after the voting closes in a private space. Once the count has begun no one is allowed to enter or leave the room.
	+ The voting list must be counted before votes are counted to establish the expected number of ballots.
	+ In the event of technical failure, the RO might decide to revert to a manual ballot or postpone the voting deadline until the fault is rectified.

Manual Method. The votes are counted by attributing ballot papers against the name of the candidate that has a 1 preference, or such a mark that satisfies the DRO.